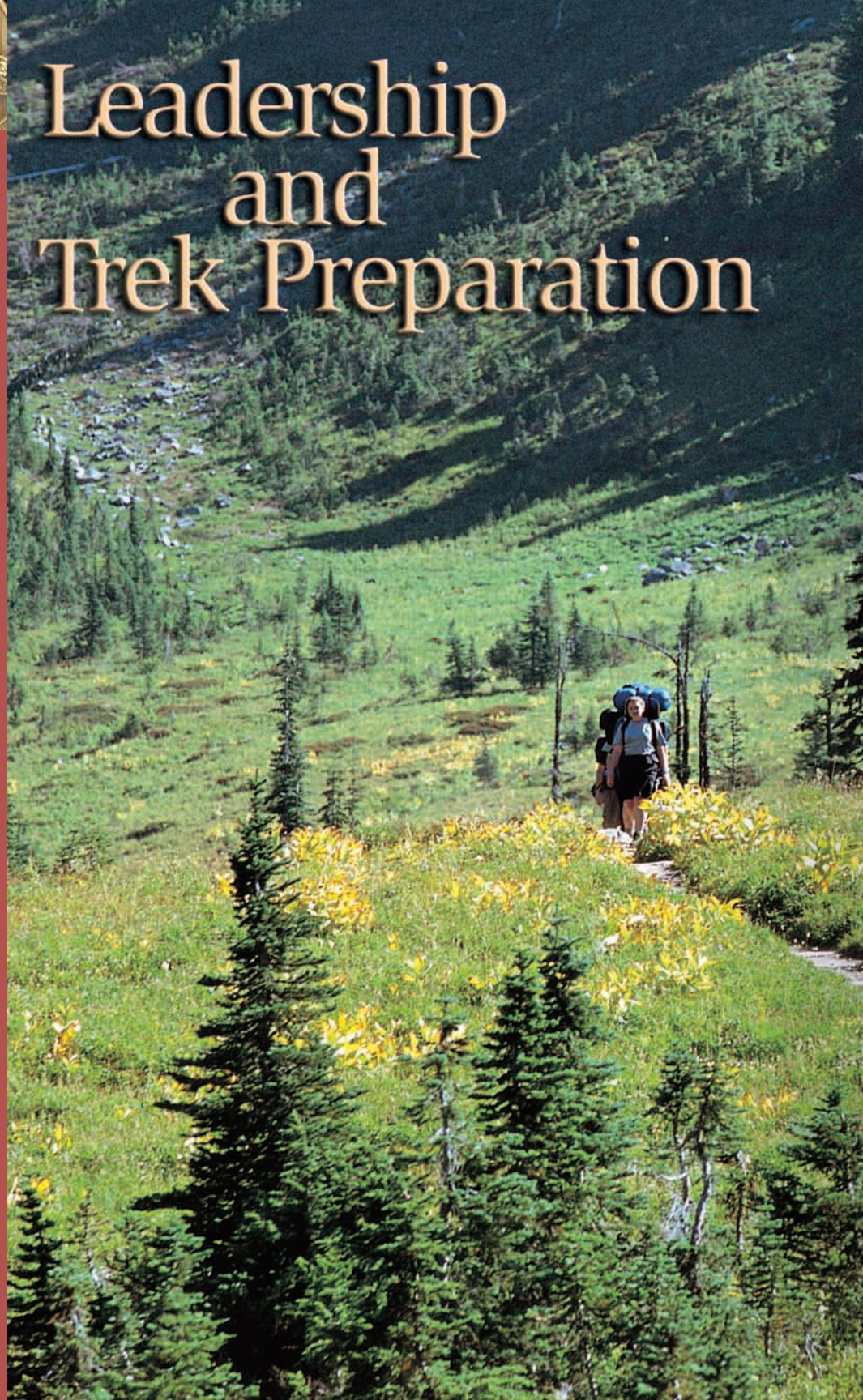
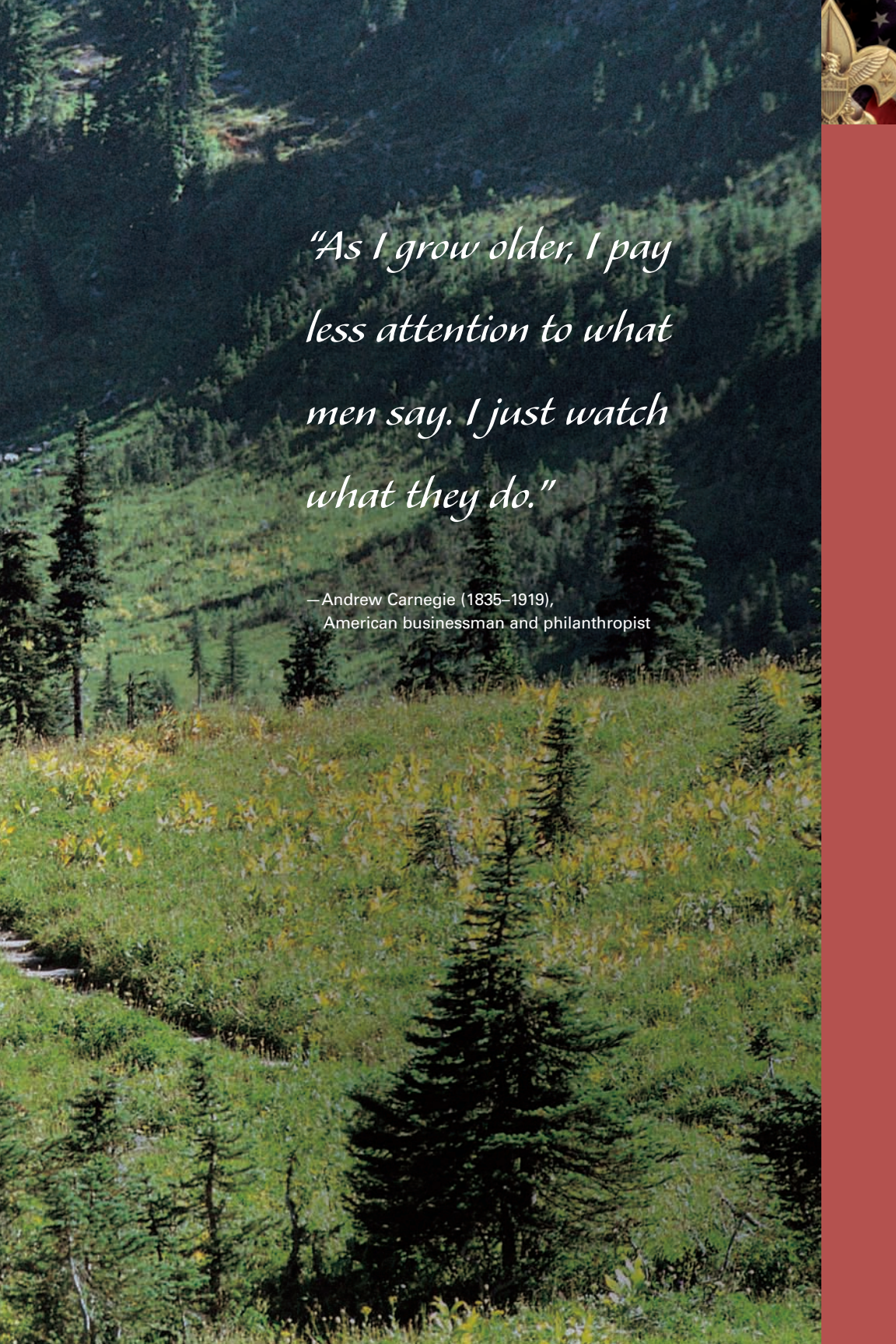




# Leadership and Trek Preparation



A scenic view of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a dirt path winds through a lush green field with some yellow wildflowers. The middle ground is filled with dense evergreen trees. In the background, a steep, forested mountain slope rises under a clear sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

*"As I grow older, I pay  
less attention to what  
men say. I just watch  
what they do."*

—Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919),  
American businessman and philanthropist





# CHAPTER

# 1





# Organizing for Adventures

*“We strive to create an environment where people are valued as individuals and are treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.”*

—From *Wood Badge for the 21st Century* (the BSA’s premier leadership training course for adult Scouters), Boy Scouts of America, 2001



A mountain travel team pushes toward the summit of a peak. Kayakers and rafters combine their knowledge to find the best routes through a thundering river. Winter campers take turns breaking trail through the drifts. Search-and-rescue team members grab their gear and respond to an emergency. Friends set out for an afternoon of hiking, fishing, or bicycle touring.

Outdoor adventures are better when they are shared. While there is safety in numbers, group dynamics involve more than simple risk management. Groups taking part in trek adventures are usually small, and the challenge of living outdoors is often heightened by weather, distance, and logistical hurdles. Joining with others ensures plenty of brains and brawn for meeting all sorts of situations.

Leadership situations seldom involve one person giving orders and everybody else simply doing what they are told. Instead, all members must take responsibility for the team’s success. When the need for direct leadership arises—coping with emergencies or defusing risky situations, for example—group members who shoulder their portion of the load and act in the group’s best interests will enhance the probability of success.

Group members working toward common goals can amass a storehouse of experience. As members of a group iron out their differences and build upon their strengths, they become proof that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts.

## Group Formation

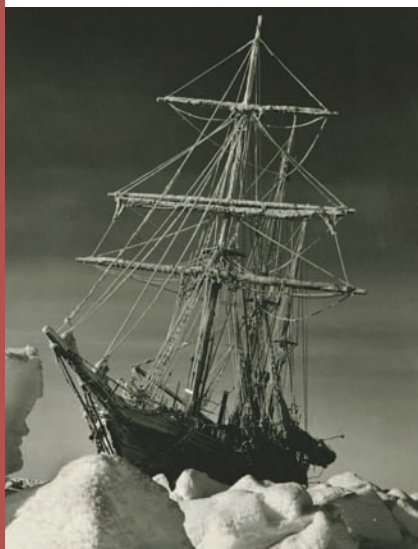
Groups form in many ways and for many reasons. The 1914 newspaper ad placed by British explorer Ernest Shackleton brought together a team of 27 adventurers for an attempted first crossing of Antarctica. Stranded for nearly two years after their ship, the *Endurance*, was crushed by ice, they worked together so well against overwhelming odds that all of them managed to return home safely. They failed to fulfill their original plan of a trans-Antarctic trek, but in terms of crew behavior and team leadership,

the Shackleton expedition can be considered one of the most successful of all wilderness journeys.

Every group has initial motives for coming together. People might be drawn to the values and opportunities of a Scout unit or a school outdoor club. Family members setting out for a camping trip often act as a team once they hit the trail. A group might be as tightly knit as close friends seeking adventures, or as random as strangers signing up for a commercial trip, a guided wilderness experience, or a training course set in the outdoors.

Those joining an outdoor group might be similar in age and level of experience, or they could represent a broad range of backgrounds. Perhaps they have shared many trek adventures already, or they might be at the beginning of their outdoor explorations. Whatever the case, people are the raw material of every group. Their histories, interests, and abilities are the building blocks for organizing an effective team for the field.

Can a blind mountaineer climb Mount Everest? It's been done. Can hearing-impaired people form trail maintenance crews doing quality work deep in the woods? Of course. Can someone with food allergies, asthma, or diabetes take part in extended backpacking trips? The answer is *perhaps*, depending upon recommendations from the person's doctor and prior arrangements made by the group. The outdoors is open to all who want to enjoy it, bringing with them a variety of experience and possibility that will enrich almost any group.



*"Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success."*

—Ernest Shackleton, 1914



## Group Size

The number of people traveling together in the outdoors must never exceed the limits established by those managing the lands where a trek will occur. The minimum size for a BSA group taking part in outdoor activities is four. That way, if someone becomes injured or ill, one party member can administer first aid while two others go for help.

Members of a trekking group should organize themselves as smaller teams of two each. These buddies share the challenges of a trip, keep track of each other, and alert group leaders to any concerns that may arise. Two people give reassurance to each other and share responsibility for navigating using map and compass.

For more on leadership, see the chapter titled “Outdoor Leadership.”

## HOW FAR AND HOW FAST?

*This general guide can help you plan how far your group will travel in a given time.*

**Two miles per hour—the speed of average hikers crossing gentle terrain**

**One mile per hour—the speed of hikers with heavy packs in rugged country**

**One hour—the amount of travel time to add for every thousand feet of elevation to be gained**

**Half an hour—the amount of travel time to subtract for every thousand feet of elevation to be lost**

**For more information on determining how far groups can travel in varying terrains, see the chapter titled “Mountain Travel.”**

## Learn From and Share With Other Travelers

Every organization involved in the outdoors has developed its own variations on teamwork, leadership, empowerment, and training. People wishing to be fully aware of a wide range of approaches to outdoor activities will seek out opportunities to learn about other organizations and their ways of doing things. They can take the best of what they learn from each group to incorporate into their own vision of leadership, group dynamics, and the practice of outdoor skills.



## Matching Groups With Adventures

Which comes first, the itinerary or the group? It all depends. Ernest Shackleton knew what he wanted to achieve in Antarctica. With a plan in place, he began recruiting the people he felt could accomplish the goals he had set. The same process is the foundation of other extremely challenging treks, especially those requiring extensive specialized experience. Group organizers will, like Shackleton, seek out people qualified as mountain travelers, river runners, or cavers, or possessing other skills they feel will help ensure the success of a particular expedition. (Of course, high levels of expertise are no assurance of a person's ability to fit in as a member of a particular group. The history of wilderness exploration is crowded with accounts of able people whose personalities prevented them from meshing with others to form successful teams, a factor that sometimes led them to make very bad choices in dangerous circumstances.)



Usually, though, a group comes together first—as a Scout unit, for example, or a group of friends, or a school outdoor club. The challenge then is for leaders to help the group develop goals that are appropriate for the abilities of its members. Ideally, these possibilities offer opportunities for members to accept responsibilities of increasing importance and to recognize and celebrate real success.



Seasoned leadership can make up for some group inexperience if leaders manage challenges in ways that encourage the members to expand their knowledge. A group new to kayak touring would not yet have the training to embark on long journeys across open seas. On the other hand, the group could find plenty of satisfaction paddling in sheltered waters while they master kayaking skills that will prepare them for increasingly challenging adventures.

In helping groups shape their adventures, leaders should not overextend a group to the point of compromising safety or creating a high probability of failure. A novice group taking on a hard winter trek might find that they are overmatched by the weather. If they spend too much time being cold, wet, and hungry, they may be unwilling to try future outdoor adventures. When group members begin with manageable trips, though, and build up to more strenuous ones, they can develop confidence and ability along the way. Ideal itineraries have the flexibility to include demanding goals as well as more manageable alternatives should conditions change or the initial plan prove to be too difficult.

**In addition to considering the abilities of group members, group leaders must be realistic about their own qualifications, and should accept responsibility only for treks that are within their levels of experience and skill.**



### ***Age-Appropriate Guidelines***

Many activities described in the *Fieldbook* are ideal for Scouts of all ages. Some of the more challenging trek adventures are better suited for Venturers, Varsity Scouts, and older Boy Scouts. The BSA's Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities publication is useful for matching groups with outdoor activities that are within their capabilities, training, and experience. For more information, see the BSA's Web site at <http://www.scouting.org>.



## Orienting a Group

Orient a map before a hike and it is set true to the world. Aligned with the compass and square with the North and South poles, the map can make more sense than if it were left flapping in the wind. Likewise, when a group is oriented before a trek, it is squared away for the journey to come. Everybody is aligned with the group's goals, plans, and methods. Members understand what lies ahead, and they know what their roles will be for achieving the most for their group and for themselves.

**Orienting a group before a trip can significantly improve the quality of the experience, the safety of the group members, and each person's ability to care for the environment.**

The task of orienting a group rests primarily with its leaders. A newly formed or inexperienced group may need lots of pretrip preparation, beginning with members getting acquainted with one another and discovering common points of experience and interest.

Orienting groups of any skill level involves the following steps:

- Setting the tone
- Developing group structure and standards
- Establishing goals
- Determining logistical tasks





*“Even in those early days, I was a great dreamer. I used to go for long walks about the area or cut across the paddocks jumping over fences with my mind far away, just thinking about adventurers and exciting things to do.”*

—Sir Edmund Hillary

### **Setting the Tone**

The chapter titled “Gearing Up” lists clothing and equipment that can be carried to help ensure safe outdoor experiences. Nowhere on those lists, though, is the most important item of all—a positive attitude.

Leaders help set the tone right from the beginning of group orientation. Once a group has left the trailhead, the tone set by its leaders can be even more important. Trek adventures can be tough. There will be times when people are colder or hotter than they would like to be, and when they are hungry and tired. There will be days when headwinds hold them back or trails are rugged and steep. There might be nights when storms batter a camp, when a stove malfunctions, or when a key piece of gear is lost. Discouraging developments are bound to occur, but if a group looks at them in a positive, realistic way, difficulties can melt to a manageable size. When spirits are high, a group can achieve almost anything.

Train yourself and your group to look for answers rather than staying stuck in uncomfortable situations. Cold and wet? Do something about getting dry and warm. Somebody having trouble with a heavy pack? Give them a hand. Not sure which way the route goes? Get out the map and compass, put your heads together, and figure things out.

“Adventure is merely discomfort rightly perceived,” goes an old traveler’s saying, and there is some truth in that. Choosing to perceive discomfort—and all of adventure—as an opportunity to act in positive, productive ways is a responsibility to be taken seriously by every person in a group.





**Group standards, understood from the start, make clear what is acceptable behavior during group activities, and what is not.**

### **Developing Group Structure and Standards**

A group's structure is the framework that helps hold it together through good times and bad. A team like Shackleton's crew headed for Antarctica might have a clear hierarchy of command. A group of friends heading for the backcountry might be set up more informally, with each person having a say in many of the decisions and the most experienced member recognized as the leader who will make the call if

there is no clear consensus or if options must be considered quickly. With Venturing crews, Varsity Scout teams, and Boy Scout troops, Scouting offers a variety of organizational structures tailored to the ages and experience levels of group members.

The standards established by a group usually are an outgrowth of the beliefs and the shared experience of the organization to which the members belong. The most basic standards are nonnegotiable guidelines intended to enhance the safety of individuals and the quality of the environment—the mandatory use of life jackets during watercraft activities, for instance, or a commitment to follow the principles of Leave No Trace throughout a trek. Anyone who wishes to take part in an adventure with the group must agree in advance to follow these standards. (Nonnegotiable standards should be limited to matters of real importance. Too many rules can dilute the emphasis of those that are vital.)



Group standards also extend beyond matters of risk management and environmental protection to include essentials of how group members will treat one another. Most are commonsense means of interacting with others in any situation and any setting. Each person will be treated fairly and equally. Differences will be respected and harassment will never be tolerated. Everyone will be supported and encouraged.

For more on group safety standards, see the chapter titled “Managing Risk.” For more on guidelines that protect the environment, see the “Leaving No Trace” section of this book.

## Establishing Goals

Goals provide group members with a shared vision and purpose. The goal of a wilderness trip might seem to be as clear as getting to a distant lake or standing on a mountaintop, but a destination is only part of it. *How* a group reaches a landmark is always a more important goal than *where* it hopes to arrive. Making a good decision about altering an itinerary or turning back might be much smarter, and a far more valuable learning experience, than touching a summit.

Establishing goals is a matter of imagining what you want to accomplish and then determining how to make that vision a reality. No doubt you and the others in your group can see yourselves paddling down a river, sleeping in igloos, hiking across a desert, or taking part in any number of other outdoor adventures. Determining logistical tasks will go a long way toward providing a blueprint for achieving your goals. Go a step further during pretrip meetings, skill sessions, and shakedown, and enliven your goals with the commitment to ensure that everyone accepts responsibility not only for the group’s success, but also for creating a healthy environment in which each person can thrive.

**When people travel the same trails, cook and eat together, and share the challenges and triumphs of outdoor living, they will discover much about practicing patience, respecting others, and developing lasting friendships.**

## Determining Logistical Tasks

The final part of orienting a group, determining logistical tasks, is a way of mapping out the steps to reach group goals. Many groups use written charts and checklists to delegate responsibilities so that nothing will be overlooked. Group members see to it that they have the gear, clothing, and provisions they will need. They know who has the assignments for cooking certain meals, who will carry first-aid gear, and how other chores will be divided up.

Organizing equipment, putting together menus, repackaging food for the trail, and other pretrip activities are opportunities for group members to work together before a trek begins. Along with the rest of the group orientation process, these activities can help the members fit into their roles and increase group cohesion that will be important to the effective operation of the group once it sets out for the field.

For more on logistical tasks, see the chapter titled “Planning a Trek.”